



June 2002

NOTICE TO POTENTIAL SUPPLIERS OF CATFISH PRODUCTS TO THE USDA

In the near future, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will issue Announcement LS-89, titled "Purchase of Frozen, Breaded, Catfish Products for Distribution to Child Nutrition and Other Federal Food and Nutrition Programs" that will set forth the contractual and specification requirements for the purchase of domestically produced, frozen, breaded, par-fried, freshwater catfish strips and nuggets. The catfish used in this program must be classed in the "*ictaluridae*" family and be harvested and processed after April 15, 2002. Additionally, producers must certify that the catfish products are free of drug, pesticide, or harmful chemical residues.

The frozen, breaded catfish strips and nuggets will only be purchased from suppliers that are approved by AMS. To become an approved supplier, an offeror will be required to submit a Technical Proposal and sample product and successfully complete a pre-award assessment audit. Offeror(s) interested in becoming an approved supplier are required to submit the following for evaluation and approval:

Product Sample:

- (1) Ten-pound sample(s) of the frozen, breaded par-fried catfish product (nuggets and/or strips) that includes the ingredients statement and Nutrition Facts Panel that conforms to the attached Item Description and Checklist of Requirements for Frozen, Breaded, Par-Fried, Freshwater Catfish, Nuggets (Code A750) and Strips (Code A751), dated June 2002. (All samples must arrive in the frozen state--zero degrees or less).

The Technical Proposal Must:

- (1) Include a detailed description of each item offered and each of the production steps that are taken to meet or exceed the minimum product requirements set forth in the Item Description and Checklist of Requirements for Frozen, Breaded, Par-Fried, Freshwater Catfish, Nuggets (Code A750) and Strips (Code A751), dated June 2002.
- (2) Describe all the quality assurance methods used to verify conformance to all requirements. This will include the monitoring and measurements taken during the process to verify conformance with each requirement. All measurement results shall be recorded and made available to AMS.
- (3) Identify all corrective actions to be taken if deviations from contractual and specification requirements occur during production, and all preventative actions to be taken to preclude a reoccurrence.

Notice to USDA Catfish Suppliers

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To become an approved supplier and be eligible to bid on the first Invitation, the Technical Proposal and product sample listed above must be submitted prior to **July 19, 2002**. This will allow sufficient time for AMS to evaluate the product, the Technical Proposal materials and conduct the required pre-award supplier assessment audit. Please forward the complete Technical Proposal package and samples to the attention of: Contracting Officer; Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 2610-South Building; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW.; Washington, D.C. 20250. It is strongly recommended that the required materials and samples be forwarded by express or courier services to ensure timely delivery.

After the Technical Proposal(s) and sample(s) are evaluated and approved, an AMS audit team will perform an in-plant assessment of the facilities, processes, and quality control program used to produce the catfish product(s) to determine the supplier's ability to meet contractual requirements. The audit will include an evaluation of the potential contractor's and subcontractor's facilities, equipment, procedures, and the appropriate documents and forms used during the production of the catfish products. Documentation must support the production of a product that complies with the Item Description and Checklist of Requirements dated June 2002. In addition, the audit will consist of the review of purchasing, receiving, production, quality control, inventory and shipping records, and interviews with management and production personnel.

The results of the AMS evaluation of the product sample(s) and Technical Proposal(s), and notification to supplier will take approximately ten working days. Suppliers with approved samples and Technical Proposals should contact Jim Riva, (Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch) on (202) 720-1124 to setup a pre-award supplier assessment audit.

If further information is needed or question arise related to contractual or specification requirements, please contact Ondray James of the Commodity Procurement Branch on (202) 720-2650.

/s/ William Sessions (6/25/02)

William T. Sessions
Associate Deputy Administrator
Livestock and Seed Program

**ITEM DESCRIPTION AND CHECKLIST OF REQUIREMENTS
FOR FROZEN, BREADED, PAR-FRIED, FRESHWATER CATFISH
STRIPS – (CODE A751) AND
NUGGETS – (CODE A750), DATED JUNE 2002**

I. ITEM DESCRIPTION

- Items - Frozen, breaded, par-fried, freshwater catfish strips and nuggets.
- Portion Size - Strips shall be of the size normally produced commercially by the offeror.
- The number and portion size of the nuggets shall be determined by the offeror to meet the 2.0 ounces meat/meat alternate “as served” requirement for Child Nutrition Programs.
- Packing - The strips and nuggets shall be packed in 40-pound shipping containers, and delivered frozen.
- Non-Fish Components - Batter/breading, seasonings, spices, and other ingredients shall not exceed 25 percent.

II. CHECKLIST OF REQUIREMENTS

A. MATERIALS

The catfish shall be harvested from commercial, U.S. farm-raised freshwater catfish of the *Ictaluridae* family (channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*), blue catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*), and the white catfish (*Ictalurus catus*)) and its hybrids. The frozen, breaded, par-fried, catfish strips and nuggets shall consist of not less than 75% catfish and not more than 25% non-fish components (batter/breading, seasonings, spices and other ingredients). Other significant ingredients (more than 1 percent) shall be derived from U.S. produced products. Product must be produced under inspection by the United States Department of Commerce (USDC) inspection regulations.

1. FISH FLESH

Raw material produced from frozen stock before April 15, 2002, is not allowed. The catfish flesh will have characteristics of good quality, including -- but not limited to -- flavor, odor, and wholesomeness. In addition, the catfish flesh shall be free of bones, skin, organs, tails, fins, and foreign material.

- a. The catfish strips will be prepared from trimmed catfish fillet (without belly-flap section).
- b. The catfish nuggets will be prepared from the belly-flap section of the catfish.

2. BATTER/BREADING

The batter/breading shall be similar to those normally used for commercially marketed breaded, par-fried, catfish strips and nuggets to produce the desired flavor, texture and color. Enriched flour of domestic origin, must be the primary ingredient by weight in the batter/breading combination.

Other ingredients shall include salt at a level not to exceed 4 percent by weight of the dry batter and breading combined. Seasonings (other than salt) are allowed up to 4 percent of the weight of the dry batter/breading mixture. Monosodium glutamate is not allowed.

3. PORTION SIZE

The portion size for strips shall be the size normally produced commercially by the offeror. The offeror shall target a portion size and number of nuggets to meet the 2.0 ounces meat/meat alternate “as served” requirement for Child Nutrition Programs. The weights shall be charted on control charts featuring average weight and range, and made available to AMS. Portion sizes shall be declared by the offeror in their technical proposal.

4. STRIP AND NUGGET DIMENSIONS

The dimensions for the strips and nuggets shall be the same as the offeror’s commercially produced products and shall be declared in their technical proposal.

5. PRODUCT TEMPERATURE

The breaded, par-fried, catfish strips and nuggets shall be individually quick frozen (IQF). The product temperature at the time of shipment and delivery shall not exceed 0°F.

6. PREPARATION/COOKING METHODS

The breaded, catfish strips and nuggets shall be prepared (par-fried) so that the end-user may bake them in a conventional or convection type oven. Cooking instructions shall be provided in the offeror’s technical proposal documentation.

7. METAL DETECTION

Catfish strips and nuggets must be free of metal contamination. Testing must be conducted after formulation, but may take place before and/or after packaging. The offeror must be able to demonstrate to the AMS agent that the metal detection equipment used is capable of detecting stainless steel, ferrous and non-ferrous metals.

B. PREPARATION FOR DELIVERY

1. PACKAGING AND PACKING

Twenty (20), 2-pound bags of strips, or four (4) 10-pound bags of nuggets shall be packed in a 40-pound (net weight) shipping container of a size to accommodate the product without slack filling or overfilling. Closure of each bag shall be by heat-sealing or metal clips. Only one size and style of primary (bags) and shipping containers may be offered in an individual shipping unit. The shipping containers shall be in compliance with the National Motor Freight Classification or Uniform Freight Classification, as applicable.

2. LABELING

Primary containers shall have a printed code that is traceable to the production lot and date. In addition, Nutrition Facts labeling is required on primary and shipping containers for catfish strips and nuggets. For shipping containers, the contractor may vary the placement of the required information (**see EXHIBIT G**). Additional markings (e.g., bar codes, company names, logos, etc.), may be included. Information may be printed or stenciled directly on the shipping containers, or mechanically printed, pressure sensitive labels may be applied. These labels must be applied in a manner that prevents their removal in an intact form.

3. PALLETIZED UNIT LOADS

Unless otherwise specified in the invitation, all truck, rail, and piggyback shipments of product shall be unitized by stacking the shipping containers on pallets. The shipping containers shall be held firmly in place by applying plastic stretch-wrap as tightly as possible around all of the tiers stacked on the pallet.

Pallets shall be flush, 48 inches long by 40 inches wide, stringer or block design, partial or full four-way entry, nonreversible, and suitable for use in the shipment of approximately 2,000 pounds of food product.

Pallet loads shall be stacked in a manner that minimizes the overhang of the shipping containers over the edges of the pallets and exposes the principle shipping container display panel of all boxes to facilitate certification examinations.

4. TRACEABILITY AND SHIPMENT



All primary containers shall bear a code that is traceable to production lot and date. All products must be delivered to AMS destinations under seal.

C. WARRANTY AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

A warranty and customer service clause that includes customer complaint resolution procedures shall be included in the technical proposal. These procedures will be used to resolve product complaints from recipient agencies or AMS.

EXHIBIT G

SHIPPING CONTAINER MARKINGS: SHIPPING CONTAINERS SHALL BE MARKED SUBSTANTIALLY AS SHOWN BELOW. MANUFACTURERS NAME AND ADDRESS SHALL APPEAR ON THE TOP, SIDE OR PRINCIPLE DISPLAY PANEL. THE USDA SYMBOL SHALL BE BLACK, FLAT, WATERFAST, AND NONSMEARING AND MAY APPEAR ON THE TOP OF THE BOX OR ON THE PRINCIPLE DISPLAY PANEL. THE USDA SYMBOL SHALL BE AT LEAST 2.0 INCHES HIGH. ALL OTHER PRINTING OR STENCILING INCLUDING THE PROCESSED UNDER FEDERAL INSPECTION (PUFI) SHIELD SHALL BE OF SIZE AND CONTRASTING COLOR TO STAND OUT PROMINENTLY AND COMPLY WITH DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE REGULATIONS.

	<p>PERISHABLE FROZEN - STORE AT 0°F (-17.8°C) OR BELOW</p> <p>**</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Manufacturer's Name and Address</p>	
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>FROZEN, BREADED AND PAR-FRIED, CATFISH *</p> <p>PRODUCT CODE A *</p> <p>CONTRACT NO. _____</p> <p>KEEP FROZEN</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>DATE PACKED</p> <p>LOT# _____</p> <p>BOX _____</p> <p>NET WT. 40 LBS.</p> <p>(18.2 KG)</p> </div> </div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>	

NOTES: DATE PACKED SHALL BE THE MONTH, DAY, AND YEAR OF PACKING.
 USDA WILL FURNISH SERIAL CONTRACT NUMBER.
 LOT NO. (CODE) AND BOX NO. MAY BE PLACED ON THE SAME LINE OR AS SHOWN ABOVE.

* The offeror shall specify strips or nuggets and the applicable product code.

** Nutrition facts labeling is required.

JUNE 2002